

§ 5.67 Exemption six: Clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

(a) *Documents affected.* We may withhold records about individuals if disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of their personal privacy.

(b) *Balancing test.* In deciding whether to release records to you that contain personal or private information about someone else, we weigh the foreseeable harm of invading that person's privacy against the public benefit that would result from the release. If you were seeking information for a purely commercial venture, for example, we might not think that disclosure would primarily benefit the public and we would deny your request. On the other hand, we would be more inclined to release information if you were working on a research project that gave promise of providing valuable information to a wide audience. However, in our evaluation of requests for records we attempt to guard against the release of information that might involve a violation of personal privacy because of a requester being able to "read between the lines" or piece together items that would constitute information that normally would be exempt from mandatory disclosure under Exemption Six.

(c) *Examples.* Some of the information that we frequently withhold under Exemption Six is: Home addresses, ages, and minority group status of our employees or former employees; social security numbers; medical information about individuals participating in clinical research studies; names and addresses of individual beneficiaries of our programs, or benefits such individuals receive; earning records, claim files, and other personal information maintained by the Social Security Administration, the Public Health Service, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

§ 5.68 Exemption seven: Law enforcement.

We are not required to disclose information or records that the government has compiled for law enforcement purposes. The records may apply to actual or potential violations of either criminal or civil laws or regulations. We can withhold these records only to the ex-

tent that releasing them would cause harm in at least one of the following situations:

(a) *Enforcement proceedings.* We may withhold information whose release could reasonably be expected to interfere with prospective or ongoing law enforcement proceedings. Investigations of fraud and mismanagement, employee misconduct, and civil rights violations may fall into this category. In certain cases—such as when a fraud investigation is likely—we may refuse to confirm or deny the existence of records that relate to the violations in order not to disclose that an investigation is in progress, or may be conducted.

(b) *Fair trial or impartial adjudication.* We may withhold records whose release would deprive a person of a fair trial or an impartial adjudication because of prejudicial publicity.

(c) *Personal privacy.* We are careful not to disclose information that could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. When a name surfaces in an investigation, that person is likely to be vulnerable to innuendo, rumor, harassment, and retaliation.

(d) *Confidential sources and information.* We may withhold records whose release could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source of information. A confidential source may be an individual; a state, local, or foreign government agency; or any private organization. The exemption applies whether the source provides information under an express promise of confidentiality or under circumstances from which such an assurance could be reasonably inferred. Also, where the record, or information in it, has been compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority conducting a criminal investigation, or by an agency conducting a lawful national security investigation, the exemption also protects all information supplied by a confidential source. Also protected from mandatory disclosure is any information which, if disclosed, could reasonably be expected to jeopardize the system of confidentiality that assures a flow of information from sources to investigatory agencies.

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(e) *Techniques and procedures.* We may withhold records reflecting special techniques or procedures of investigation or prosecution, not otherwise generally known to the public. In some cases, it is not possible to describe even in general terms those techniques without disclosing the very material to be withheld. We may also withhold records whose release would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if this disclosure could reasonably be expected to create a risk that someone could circumvent requirements of law or of regulation.

(f) *Life and physical safety.* We may withhold records whose disclosure could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual. This protection extends to threats and harassment as well as to physical violence.

§5.69 Exemptions 8 and 9: Records on financial institutions; records on wells.

Exemption eight permits us to withhold records about regulation or supervision of financial institutions. Exemption nine permits the withholding of geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells.

PART 5a [RESERVED]

PART 5b—PRIVACY ACT REGULATIONS

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AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 301, 5 U.S.C. 552a.

SOURCE: 40 FR 47409, Oct. 8, 1975, unless otherwise noted.

§5b.1 Definitions.

As used in this part:

(a) *Access* means availability of a record to a subject individual.

(b) *Agency* means the Department of Health and Human Services.

(c) *Department* means the Department of Health and Human Services.

(d) *Disclosure* means the availability or release of a record to anyone other than the subject individual.

(e) *Individual* means a living person who is a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence. It does not include persons such as sole proprietorships, partnerships, or corporations. A business firm which is identified by the name of one or more persons is not an individual within the meaning of this part.

(f) *Maintain* means to maintain, collect, use, or disseminate when used in connection with the term “record”; and, to have control over or responsibility for a system of records when used in connection with the term “system of records.”

(g) *Notification* means communication to an individual whether he is a subject individual.

(h) *Record* means any item, collection, or grouping of information about an individual that is maintained by the Department, including but not limited to the individual’s education, financial transactions, medical history, and criminal or employment history and that contains his name, or an identifying number, symbol, or other identifying particular assigned to the individual, such as a finger or voice print or a photograph. When used in this part, record means only a record which is in a system of records.

(i) *Responsible Department official* means that officer who is listed in a notice of a system of records as the system manager for a given system of records or another individual listed in the notice of a system of records to